1:Beaglehole and Beaglehole E-5 (1934-5) 1938 Pukapukans

COLORS

192
822
151

The Pukapukan has little need to distinguish fine degrees of color gradation. The environment is monotonous in color scheme: white coral sand, dull green of coconut and other tropical trees, blue sky and sea. Tropical reef fish are of course a riot of bright, variegated coloring, but they are easily distinguished in terms of shape, number of fins, and so forth. In general, therefore, the Pukapukan is content to distinguish one or two colors like red or brown and blue or yellow. These with black, white, and a term for variegated coloring are ample for his needs, because color terms can be duplicated and combined with other terms to give an approximation to a desired degree of saturation. Terms for a commonly used color series are:

Kula: red.
Kulakula: brown (as the hair).
Kula uliuli: very dark red-brown.
Kula keye: deep red.
Kula lelenga: greasy (?) red.
Kula melo: scarlet.
Kula melomelo: reddish.
Kula pongipongi: brownish red.
Kula toto: blood red.
Kula yiyinu: shiny red.
Melomelo: yellowish.
Yengayenga, yeyenga, pa yengayenga: blue or yellow or a mixture of these two colors.
Uyi, uyiuyi, pa uyiuyi, uyi koka: dark greenish.
Mumuka, manunu, litolito, kena, kenakena: white.
Mukalele, mukavakevake: blinding white surface.
Tea: white, used only in proper names.
Kalipo: iridescent.
Kokone, konekone, koyikoyi: striped or variegated.
Uli (general word), uli popo, uliuli, pa uliuli, ulimotumotu, ulimangiloli, uli koka, uli popokawa: black and various saturations of black.

Informants found it impossible to compare exactly any of these adjectives with European colors, though perhaps a deeper investigation may establish a few exact correspondences. Informants were unable to agree upon the color name for a yellow pencil, some believing the color to be *yenga*, others *lenga*, a Rarotongan word meaning blue. Similarly, informants had no word to define the color of a piece of white paper. They called it *kena*; but the same word is also given for the color of pandanus (*lito*) plaited mats, which is usually a very light saturation of yellow. Informants defined the color of white clouds as *mamake*, which seems to mean perfectly clear and soft. The tendency perhaps is to describe colors in terms of surfaces or relative degrees of saturation, which must be increased greatly before another color results. Smaller increases of saturation are simply described by duplicating the basic word or parts of the word.